



Sayaka Murata

A Clean Marriage

Link to the text: <https://granta.com/a-clean-marriage/>

Author Biography:

Murata is a Japanese author, born in 1979 in Inzai, Chiba Prefecture, Japan. She is a prolific writer, publishing ten novels and many short stories since her debut in 2003. She has been nominated for and won several literature prizes, including the prestigious Akutagawa Prize, which she was awarded in 2016 for her 10th novel *Konbini ningen* (Convenience Store Person). Murata's work focusses on questioning accepted norms within society, especially concepts of marriage, sexuality, and normalcy. Her stories unsettle traditional conceptions of normal relationships and routine life, raising questions about happiness, ordinariness, and the modern life. Alongside her writing career, Murata has worked as a part-time convenience store clerk in Tokyo.

Questions:

- In what ways can you interpret the term a 'clean' marriage?
- How is the idea of normalcy presented within this story?
- In what ways does this story question concepts of romantic love?
- How does Murata subvert traditional forms of objectification through the character of 'My Husband'?
- Why do you think the character of the husband reacts as he does to the child at the end of the story?

Discuss this paragraph:

'Sexual orientation is becoming much more diverse,' she went on. 'Is a man attracted to young girls going to get an erection with his thirty-five-year-old wife? Can a woman who only gets aroused by two-dimensional men have sex with a living three-dimensional man without pain? Nowadays, your partner is not necessarily a sex object – this is a wonderful advancement. It means you can choose to have a family by rational means, thinking with your head, not with your loins. Couples who come to us can avail themselves of our experts and leave their superior genes to posterity by means of the Clean Breeder, our pure facilitator of reproduction . . .'

- What commentary is Murata making on concepts of modernity?
- Do you think anything has been lost in the translation of this story?